

# State of Montana Office of the Legislative Auditor

## Performance Audit

### BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION Fire Services Training School

# PLEASE RETURN

This report contains recommendations concerning the school's role, activities and sponsorship. These recommendations include:

- Placement of the school under a new administrative sponsor.
- School coordination of fire services training in Montana.
- Implementation of an automated record system.

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Performance audits conducted by the Office of the Legislative Auditor are designed to assess state government operations. From the audit work, a determination is made as to whether agencies and programs are accomplishing their purposes, and whether they can do so with greater efficiency and economy. In performing the audit work, the audit staff uses audit standards set forth by the United States General Accounting Office.

Members of the performance audit staff hold degrees in disciplines appropriate to the audit process. Areas of expertise include business and public administration, statistics, economics, computer science, and engineering.

Performance audits are performed at the request of the Legislative Audit Committee which is a bicameral and bipartisan standing committee of the Montana Legislature. The committee consists of four members of the Senate and four members of the House of Representatives.

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## PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION  
FIRE SERVICES TRAINING SCHOOL

August 1985

Report Number 85P-14

Members of the audit staff involved in this audit were: Jim Pellegrini, manager; Dave Gould, supervisor; Brad Rafish, auditor-in-charge; and Alice Delvaux, staff auditor. Additional information on the audit can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Legislative Auditor (406) 444-3122.



STATE OF MONTANA

Office of the Legislative Auditor



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August 1985

The Legislative Audit Committee  
of the Montana Legislature:

This is our performance audit of the Fire Services Training School. This report contains conclusions and recommendations concerning school activities and sponsorship. School and potential administrative sponsor responses are contained at the end of the report.

We wish to express our appreciation to the Board of Public Education and the staff of the school for their cooperation and assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott A. Seacat".  
Scott A. Seacat  
Acting Legislative Auditor



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Alan D. Nicholson, Helena	1992
Arthur R. "Rocky" Schauer, Libby	1989
Bill Thomas, Great Falls	1986
Thomas A. Thompson, Browning	1987

### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIALS

Dr. Hidde H. Van Duym	Executive Secretary to the Board
Seldon "Butch" Weedon	Director, Fire Services Training School



## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a listing of report recommendations from our performance audit of the Fire Services Training School (FSTS). The major issues discussed in the report relate to the inability of the school to meet its legislative intent and the need for a new sponsor for the school.

Although the school is generally doing a good job with its present resources, it is not able to meet legislative intent. The current level of funding has only allowed the school to provide limited training to a small portion of Montana's fire fighters each year.

The Board of Public Education is presently the school's administrative sponsor. We found that the board is not the most appropriate administrative sponsor for the school. We reviewed a number of potential alternative sponsors and recommend the FSTS be placed under a new administrative sponsor.

The school's response to each recommendation follows the recommendation. The board/school concurred with each recommendation. The potential administrative sponsors provided responses/comments regarding the feasibility of their assuming sponsorship of the school. See Chapter II for an overview of the Fire Services Training School and its activities.

## CHAPTER III

### TRAINING AND EDUCATION (page 16)

The school is able to meet its legislative intent only to a limited extent. Our review of the school's procedures and practices shows that the FSTS is providing good training with the resources it has available. During our audit we identified several areas of the school's training and education program which could be improved. In order for the school to make many of these improvements, additional legislative support is necessary.

Areas that would benefit from increased support include:

1. training coverage and field instructors;
2. hands-on training;
3. hazardous material training; and
4. public education.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

### FIRE SERVICES COORDINATION (page 23)

Fire services training in Montana presently lacks coordination. Although many training providers exist in the state, most direct their training to a particular audience and do not coordinate types of classes and presentation times.

#### RECOMMENDATION #1 (page 24)

WE RECOMMEND THE FSTS COORDINATE FIRE SERVICES TRAINING IN MONTANA.

Agency Response: Concur (page 43)

### STATUTORY COMPLIANCE (page 25)

During our audit we found two subsections of section 20-31-103, MCA, which do not currently reflect FSTS training practices. These subsections relate to:

1. provision of training in investigating the cause of fires (presently being provided by the Fire Marshal Bureau at the Department of Justice); and
2. development of new methods of fire prevention and fire fighting (the school, with its limited resources, can only provide methods which have already been developed by other sources.)

#### RECOMMENDATION #2 (page 25)

WE RECOMMEND THE FSTS SEEK STATUTORY CHANGE TO SECTION 20-31-103, MCA, TO REFLECT CURRENT TRAINING PRACTICES.

Agency Response: Concur (page 43)

## CHAPTER IV

### SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

#### OFFICE AUTOMATION (page 26)

We found deficiencies in the school's record-keeping/filing system and related administrative functions. Areas of special interest included fire fighter training records, mailing labels and word processing which could be improved through office automation.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

### RECOMMENDATION #3 (page 28)

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE FSTS IMPLEMENT AN AUTOMATED RECORD SYSTEM.

Agency Response: Concur (page 44)

### OFFICE FACILITIES (page 28)

The current office conditions are inadequate due to a lack of necessary space and privacy. Because of the crowded office conditions, staff productivity is decreased. As the school continues to expand its training resources and equipment, more physical space will be needed.

### RECOMMENDATION #4 (page 29)

WE RECOMMEND THE FSTS DEVELOP A PLAN TO IMPROVE CURRENT OFFICE CONDITIONS.

Agency Response: Concur (page 44)

### STAFF TRAINING (page 29)

To effectively train state fire fighters, the FSTS instructors need to be informed about current fire fighting tactics and methods. Because of the limited school budget, employee training has not been a high priority. The school currently has no formal plan specifying what training its employees need and when it will be provided.

### RECOMMENDATION #5 (page 30)

WE RECOMMEND THE FSTS DEVELOP A FORMAL PLAN TO IDENTIFY EMPLOYEE TRAINING NEEDS AND PROVIDE TRAINING.

Agency Response: Concur (page 44)

### FSTS ADMINISTRATIVE STAFFING (page 30)

Because of the administrative assistant's heavy workload, instructors have had to do much of their own clerical work. Approximately 20 percent of each instructor's time, which could be spent on training related functions, is spent on clerical duties. The excessive amount of administrative/clerical work has also caused backlogs in the issuance of certificates.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

### RECOMMENDATION #6 (page 31)

WE RECOMMEND THE FSTS CONTINUE TO SEEK ADDITIONAL CLERICAL SUPPORT.

Agency Response: Concur (page 44)

### FSTS ADVISORY COUNCIL (page 31)

During our audit we found little indication that the council is taking an active role in advising the FSTS. Without active council involvement, the director of the school is making key decisions without formal input from the groups which the FSTS serves. There are also a number of groups with little or no representation on the advisory council that might prove beneficial to the operation of the council and school.

### RECOMMENDATION #7 (page 34)

- A. THE SCHOOL'S DIRECTOR AND ITS SPONSOR GENERATE MORE INVOLVEMENT ON THE PART OF THE COUNCIL.
- B. THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION SEEK CHANGES TO SECTION 2-15-1519, MCA, TO ALLOW FLEXIBILITY IN APPOINTING MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL.

Agency Response: Concur (page 44)

## CHAPTER V

### SCHOOL SPONSORS/LOCATION (page 35)

Six potential sponsors for the school were identified and reviewed:

1. Board of Public Education;
2. University System;
3. Department of Commerce;
4. Department of Vocational Education Services - Office of Public Instruction;
5. Department of State Lands; and
6. Department of Justice.

Based on our review, only two of the potential sponsors, the Board of Public Education and the Department of Commerce do not

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS (Continued)

appear to be feasible sponsors for the school. Actual location of the school will be dependent on the sponsor chosen.

### RECOMMENDATION #8 (page 42)

WE RECOMMEND THE MONTANA LEGISLATURE PLACE THE FSTS UNDER A NEW ADMINISTRATIVE SPONSOR.

Agency Response: Concur (page 45)



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Executive Secretary to the Board of Public Education, the Legislative Audit Committee approved a performance audit of the Montana Fire Services Training School (FSTS). The Office of the Legislative Auditor was also directed to examine the alternatives for sponsorship and potential relocation of the school. This report summarizes the results of our performance audit.

### OBJECTIVES OF AUDIT

The four main objectives of this performance audit were:

1. To determine the status of fire service training activity in Montana.
2. To document the actual role of the school and determine whether current procedures are adequate for meeting state needs for training fire fighters.
3. To review the efficiency and effectiveness of school operations.
4. To review alternatives for school sponsorship and location.

During our audit we asked the director of the school for input on selected audit areas. These areas related to report issues and recommendations and were discussed with the director during the audit, rather than after audit completion.

### SCOPE OF AUDIT

The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted governmental performance audit standards. A review of the financial status of the school was not included.

We examined and observed the training and education functions performed by the school. Current organizational structure and operating procedures were also reviewed. Interviews were

conducted with school staff, state agency officials, and with local fire service representatives. We observed selected training sessions conducted by the FSTS to determine course content, methods of presentation, and overall organization of each session.

Questionnaires were sent to all Montana fire department chiefs and to over 400 past participants in FSTS training. These questionnaires were designed to provide us with information on fire chiefs' and trainees' views on the school, as well as to identify their own training needs.

Ten states were contacted to obtain comparative information on the functions of similar fire service training schools. We also contacted other Montana state agencies to identify options for future sponsorship of the Fire Services Training School.

### COMPLIANCE

As part of our audit we reviewed school compliance with state laws, administrative rules, and policies relating to the Fire Services Training School. Specific instances of noncompliance with laws, rules, or policies that were found in our review are discussed in related report sections. For items not included in our compliance scope and therefore not specifically tested, nothing came to our attention that would indicate significant instances of noncompliance.

### ISSUE FOR FURTHER STUDY

During our audit, we found that there is presently no established system to review and evaluate the adequacy and ability of Montana fire departments to respond to a fire or other emergencies. The Insurance Services Office, a nationwide organization, does periodically review fire departments, but only as part of a process for gathering information to be used in setting fire insurance rates.

Since our audit scope was limited to the Fire Services Training School, we did not pursue this issue further. There are

methods that could be considered by fire services in Montana to help ensure the adequacy of fire departments.

The establishment of a peer review system for fire departments could be considered. Reviews of a fire department could be made by fire services personnel from other fire departments using specific standards or criteria.

Another method could be the establishment of a fire department certification system. Under such a system, fire departments would be certified at different levels if they met specific requirements such as having a certain level of training for their fire fighters or meeting certain requirements for fire fighting equipment based on area/population served.

Either of the previously discussed methods would require the establishment of criteria or standards against which the reviewed departments would be compared. Both methods could provide incentives for fire departments to ensure fire fighters have adequate training and to maintain more efficient and effective operations. Either method could help improve individual community fire insurance ratings. From conversations with the Insurance Services Office, we have found that insurance ratings depend significantly on the adequacy of fire departments in such areas as personnel training and equipment. If fire departments are improved as a result of either method, better fire insurance ratings may be received from the Insurance Services Office, thereby lowering insurance rates.

This area appears to be an issue which could be studied by such groups as the Fire Services Training Advisory Council, the Montana Fire Chiefs Association, the Montana Association of Counties, or the Montana League of Cities and Towns.



## CHAPTER II.

### BACKGROUND

Montana presently has more than 460 fire departments. As a rural state, only 17 paid fire departments serve its 13 largest cities. The remaining communities, towns, and rural areas are served by 445 volunteer fire departments.

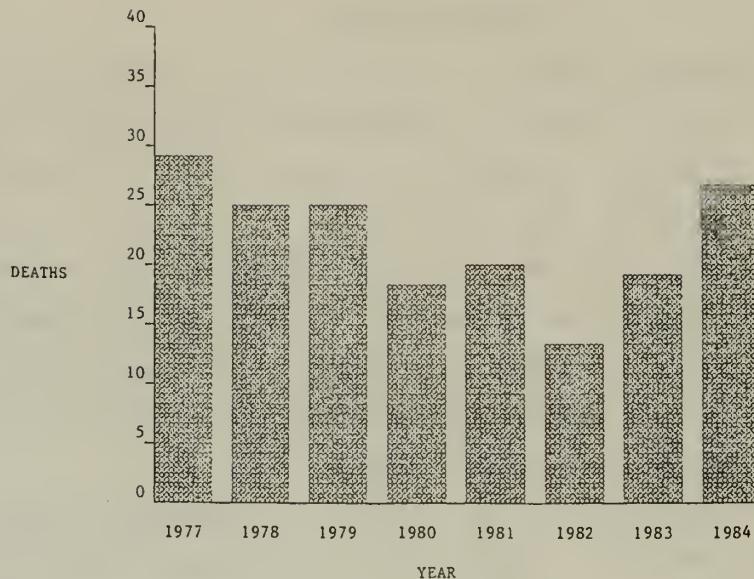
There are approximately 8,600 fire fighters who are members of the fire services in the state. We estimate that 94 percent of these fire fighters are volunteers. Departments range in size from "one man operations" to over 100 paid personnel with an average of 23 fire fighters on department rosters.

Many fire departments are organized as "agencies" within city or county governments. Some areas are protected by fire districts. One area near Billings, uses private, for profit, fire protection. Most areas in the state, though, are under the protection of volunteer fire departments, many of which are not organized as a part of government. Funding for these companies is provided in a variety of ways, ranging from total government support to total public donations.

The average time a fire fighter has been involved with the fire service is nine and one-half years. Years with fire departments range from less than one year to over sixty. Fire fighters range in age from 18 to 70 plus, with the average age being 38.

In 1984, fires in Montana destroyed more than \$14.5 million in fixed property and caused 27 deaths and 28 injuries. Illustrations 1 and 2 detail Montana fire deaths since 1977 and the value of property lost since 1978.

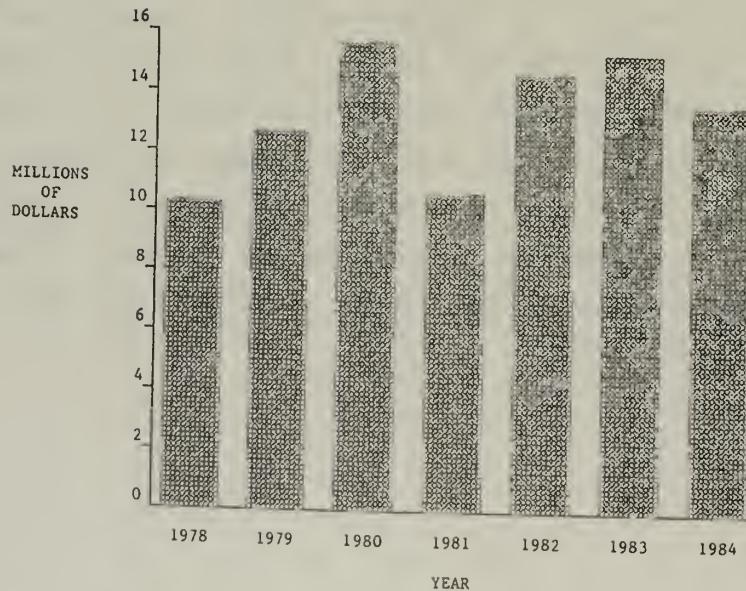
MONTANA FIRE DEATHS  
1977 to 1984



Source: Fire Marshal Bureau Annual Reports

Illustration 1

MONTANA PROPERTY LOSS  
1978 to 1984



Source: Fire Marshal Bureau Annual Reports

Illustration 2

## HISTORY OF THE FIRE SERVICES TRAINING SCHOOL

The Fire Services Training School was created in 1957 by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 1973 the school was moved to Great Falls and placed under Great Falls School District #1. The school became a state agency in 1977, directed and controlled by the Board of Public Education. It remains in Great Falls.

The school was originally developed at the urging of the Montana Fire Chiefs Association. Because most of the state's fire departments were receiving little or no training, the association believed a central school would be better able to deliver needed education.

## ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

The role of the Fire Services Training School is generally viewed as one of providing support and training for the state's fire services. Support takes the form of specific technical or advisory assistance such as helping areas organize fire departments and testing department equipment. Training is provided through local and regional school instructed sessions as well as through the "train the trainer" concept - teaching various instructors the necessary techniques to allow them to instruct their own area personnel. The school also provides training aids through an extensive audiovisual and resource library.

Our survey of Montana fire chiefs and school trainees asked what they perceived the role of the Fire Services Training School to be. Providing support and training were the most common responses. Four specific roles were listed and each surveyed chief and trainee was asked to check any role which was applicable. Illustration 3 summarizes the survey responses.

FIRE SERVICES SURVEY RESPONSES  
- Role of the School -

<u>Listed Role</u>	<u>Percent of Responses</u>	
	<u>Chiefs</u>	<u>Trainees</u>
Provide Support	75%	74%
Provide Certification	66%	50%
Provide Training	83%	80%
Publish Materials	59%	42%

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor

Illustration 3

Montana's fire chiefs and fire fighters also expressed their satisfaction with the school. Over 81 percent of the state's fire chiefs sampled during our survey believed the school was doing an average or better job with 64 percent believing the job was above average or better. Ninety-five percent of trainees also responded that the FSTS was doing average or better, while 75 percent believed the quality of the school was above average or better. Forty-four percent of responding Montana fire chiefs, on an unsolicited basis, also expressed specifically that the school served an important, needed function, as did 46 percent of responding trainees.

Fire Services Training

To help reduce the loss of life, injury, and property damage caused by fire, the FSTS provides paid and volunteer fire fighters with professional training. The school also helps to coordinate other agencies' fire fighter training statewide.

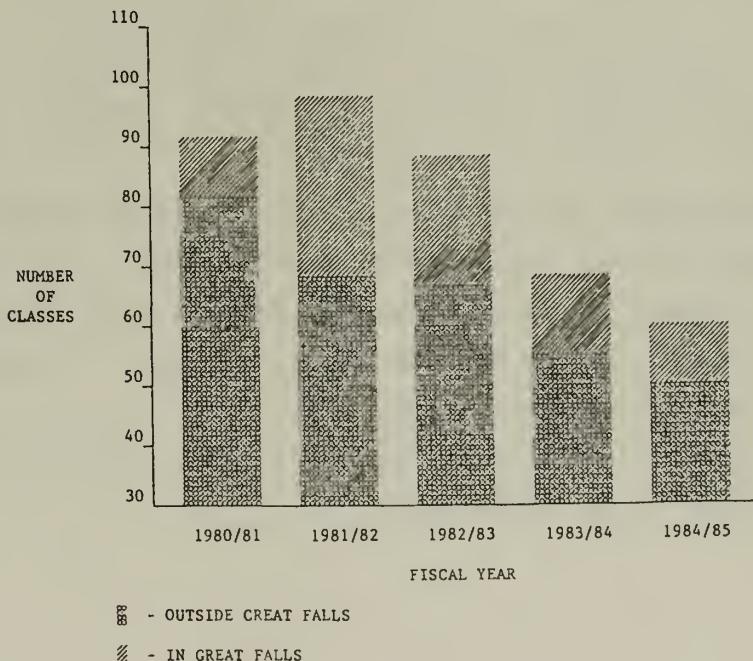
Training offered by the school consists of courses offered in the four following areas:

<u>Basic Fire Fighting</u>	<u>Advanced Fire Fighting</u>	<u>Instructor Training</u>	<u>Fire Officer Training</u>
- Fire Prevention	- Fire Prevention	- Basic Instruction	- Management
- Fire Suppression	- Fire Suppression	- Advanced Instruction	- Supervision
- Fire Control	- Fire Control		- Incident Analysis

Since 1981, attendance at FSTS training has surpassed 4,700 (includes fire fighters who have attended more than one class). Some classes are offered in Great Falls, but the majority are given at various locations throughout the state. Illustration 4 details the number of classes offered both in and out of Great Falls in the last four years.

#### FSTS TRAINING CLASSES

Fiscal Years 1980-81 to 1984-85 (through April 1985)



Source: Compiled by Office of the Legislative Auditor

Illustration 4

As shown by Illustration 4, the number of classes conducted by the FSTS has dropped. There are two reasons. First, the school, in 1983, went to a "regional" method of providing school-conducted training. Classes have since been offered primarily on weekends instead of only on weeknights. This approach decreased the actual number of classes offered, but increased the number of fire departments reached. Local training by the school has continued, but only in and around Great Falls and Miles City.

The second cause of the decline in FSTS-conducted classes resulted from the school's increased use of field instructors. The FSTS trains instructors who then provide training to others. This allows more fire fighters to receive needed instruction, but these classes are not recorded as being given by the school.

### Certification

The school issues two types of certificates: attendance certificates and certification certificates for Fire Fighter I, II, III, Instructor I, and Airport Fire Fighter classifications. Certification involves successful completion of a written examination derived from standards adopted by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Certification provides a consistent means for ranking personnel based on their completed training. Each certification level specifies certain performance objectives which are considered the minimums necessary for competence at that level. Montana's certification program is entirely voluntary.

Illustration 5 shows the number of fire fighters and instructors certified by the school since 1981.

CERTIFIED FIRE FIGHTERS/INSTRUCTORS  
Fiscal Years 1980-81 to 1984-85 (through April 1985)

	<u>FY 80-81</u>	<u>FY 81-82</u>	<u>FY 82-83</u>	<u>FY 83-84</u>	FY 84-85 through April	<u>Total**</u>
Fire Fighter I	*	*	92	131	73	296
Fire Fighter II	*	*	84	87	116	287
Fire Fighter III	*	*	120	107	144	371
Instructor I	16	20	27	43	50	156

\*Information unavailable

\*\*Certification levels can include individuals with multiple certifications

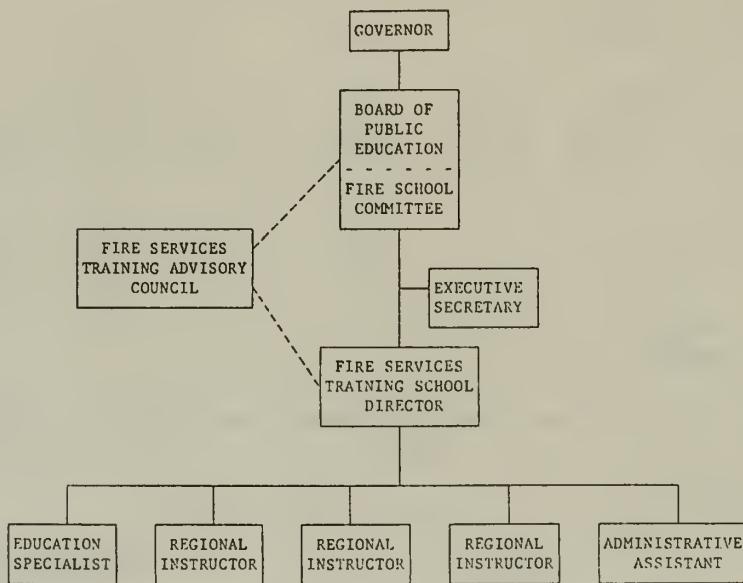
Source: Compiled by Office of the Legislative Auditor

Illustration 5

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The Fire Services Training School currently has a staff of six, which includes the director, three regional instructors, an education specialist, and an administrative assistant. Following is an illustration of the organization of the Fire Services Training School:

## FIRE SERVICES TRAINING SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

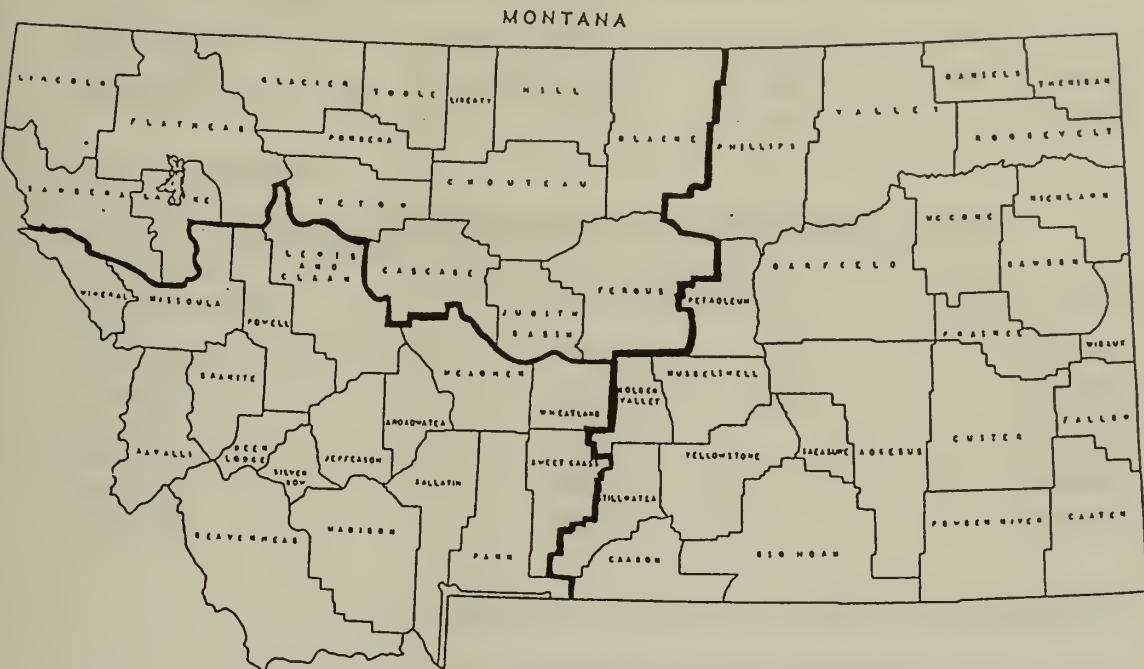


Source: Fire Services Training School

Illustration 6

For training purposes, the school has divided the state into three districts which are administered by three regional instructors. Two instructors are located at the vocational-technical center in Great Falls and one operates out of his home in Miles City.

## FSTS INSTRUCTOR DISTRICTS



Source: Fire Services Training School

Illustration 7

The school's education specialist manages the FSTS training materials, organizes a quarterly newsletter, provides general management of the public fire safety education programs, and trains local fire department personnel (field instructors) in teaching methods and techniques. These field instructors, although not part of the school staff, provide training to rural and urban fire fighters. The school provides these instructors with class outlines and resource materials.

## SCHOOL FUNDING

The Fire Services Training School is presently funded entirely by state General Fund appropriations. The school periodically receives minimal donations from private sources to purchase resource materials. The school also received federal grants to

deliver fire safety education from 1978 to 1982. Currently, limited federal grant money is periodically available to the school.

The following illustration indicates FSTS appropriations and expenditures for the last four fiscal years, as well as appropriations for the next biennium. Expenditures by area for fiscal year 1983-84 are listed in Illustration 9.

FSTS APPROPRIATIONS AND EXPENDITURES - UNAUDITED

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriations *</u>	<u>Expenditures *</u>
1981-82	\$199,480	\$198,722
1982-83	218,563	211,805
1983-84	228,983	219,391
1984-85	238,435	201,497***
1985-86	247,759**	N/A
1986-87	236,868	N/A

\*Includes both Federal and General Fund dollars

\*\*Includes \$14,000 Grant and \$3,000 Revolving Fund

\*\*\*Expenditures through May 1985

N/A - Information not available

Source: Statewide Budgeting and Accounting System and Office of Budget and Program Planning

Illustration 8

FSTS EXPENDITURES - UNAUDITED  
Fiscal Year 1983-84

Personal Services		
Salaries	\$125,432	
Benefits	<u>23,707</u>	
Total		\$149,139
Operating Expenses		
Contracted	10,086	
Supplies and Materials	18,472	
Communications	7,124	
Travel	16,589	
Rent	273	
Repair and Maintenance	2,387	
Other	<u>1,742</u>	
Total		56,673
Equipment	<u>13,579</u>	
Total		<u>13,579</u>
		\$219,391

Source: Statewide Budgeting and Accounting System

Illustration 9

FIRE SERVICES TRAINING ADVISORY COUNCIL

By statute, the Fire Services Training Advisory Council is appointed by the Board of Public Education to advise the school and the board on planning, coordination, governance, management, and control of the Fire Services Training School to promote the purposes of the school. The council membership includes eight representatives of fire related interests in the state, the State Fire Marshal, and the FSTS director.

Meetings are held by the council twice a year. Various topics including school curriculum, budgets, certification, goals and objectives, and general problems are discussed.

OTHER FIRE SERVICES TRAINING PROVIDERS

Aside from the Fire Services Training School, other providers of fire services training exist in Montana. Many fire departments

have training officers who provide and schedule fire fighting training within their department. State, regional, federal and private groups offer certain types of training to various organizations within the state.

Federal agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Land Management provide limited training mainly for personnel within their organizations. The Montana Department of State Lands is primarily responsible for all wild land fire training in the state. Other regional organizations, such as, local fire districts and area training centers, provide fire protection training to members of their groups. Private firms, such as railroads and propane distributors, offer specific training to their own employees, but also allow area fire department personnel to attend.

## CHAPTER III

### TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Section 20-31-103, MCA, states the purpose of the school is to:

- (1) reduce the loss of life and personal injury caused by fire;
- (2) reduce property damage and loss caused by fire;
- (3) provide paid, volunteer, and other publicly or privately employed fire fighters with professional training;
- (4) provide training in investigating the cause of fire;
- (5) develop new methods of fire prevention and fire fighting;
- (6) provide expertise for testing fire fighting methods and fire fighting equipment; and
- (7) provide public educational programs to promote fire prevention.

The school is able to meet its intended purpose only to a limited extent. The school presently provides only basic training and education services to the state's fire services personnel due to funding limitations.

The Fire Services Training School operates many programs to meet its responsibilities. The school uses both a local and regional approach. Local assistance, given upon request, allows instructors to give training, usually at local fire departments, to consult with local officials on fire-related problems and projects, and to assist in developing local training programs. The regional school concept provides a series of training sessions to more than one department.

Our review of the school's procedures and practices shows that the FSTS is providing good training with the resources it has available. Responses from our survey also indicate a high level of

satisfaction by fire services personnel with the FSTS. The illustration below lists the percent of fire chiefs and trainees who believe the various aspects of training are above average or excellent.

**FIRE SERVICES PERSONNEL  
SURVEY RESPONSES**  
**— Training Opinions —**

<u>Training Aspect</u>	<u>Percent of Responses</u>	
	<u>Above Average or Excellent</u>	<u>Trainees</u>
Topic of Training	58%	69%
Quality of Training	64%	78%
Content of Training	55%	72%
Quality of Visual Aids	75%	63%
Size of Classes	40%	49%
Quality of Facilities	45%	58%
Availability of Classes	38%	41%
Overall Opinion	64%	75%

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor

Illustration 10

**ABILITY TO PROVIDE INTENDED SERVICES**

During our audit we identified several areas of the school's training and education program which could be improved. However, in order for the school to make many of these improvements, additional legislative support/funding is necessary. The following sections detail specific reasons why the school is presently not able to provide intended services.

**Training Coverage and Field Instructors**

The FSTS currently uses three instructors and an education specialist to deliver training programs. Approximately fifty to sixty regional courses a year are scheduled. With current training resources, these classes are only able to reach 15-20 percent of the state's fire fighters a year. Our survey results have also shown that over 21 percent of Montana's fire departments have

received no formal training from any source in the past two years. Sources include the FSTS, other local fire departments, other state agencies, federal agencies, or private organizations.

To provide necessary training to Montana fire services personnel, a widely distributed network of trainers/instructors is needed. The FSTS has tried to provide more coverage to state fire fighters through the use of a field instructor network. Field instructors, both paid/contract and volunteer, deliver training to their own and neighboring departments. Because of limited funding, contract instructors are minimally used. The school previously requested additional funding for this purpose but funding was denied.

Without increased instructors, many of the state's fire fighters will continue to receive little or no training. Because of the vast area of the state, travel expenses increase the costs to deliver training sessions. Classes also can generally only be given on weekends, as most of the state's fire fighters are volunteer. To overcome these problems and meet the responsibility of the school at a reasonable cost, the use of contract instructors could be increased.

### Hands-on Training

Training provided by the FSTS currently takes two forms: classroom and hands-on. Classroom training generally is easier to deliver and eliminates the risk of injury. The majority of the school's training takes place within a classroom. Hands-on experience allows fire fighters to gain proficiency in controlling fires in the shortest possible time.

The FSTS has recognized the need for hands-on training through the use of a smoke maze trailer and flammable liquids trailer. The smoke maze (see Illustration 11) is a semi-trailer pulled by a tractor on loan from the Department of State Lands. A fire fighter crawls into passageways in the trailer as smoke is pumped into it. This exercise allows the trainee to experience realistic situations as would be found in actual fires. The school's flammable liquids trailer (see Illustration 12) allows fire fighters the opportunity to control and/or extinguish flammable liquid fires.

FSTS SMOKE MAZE

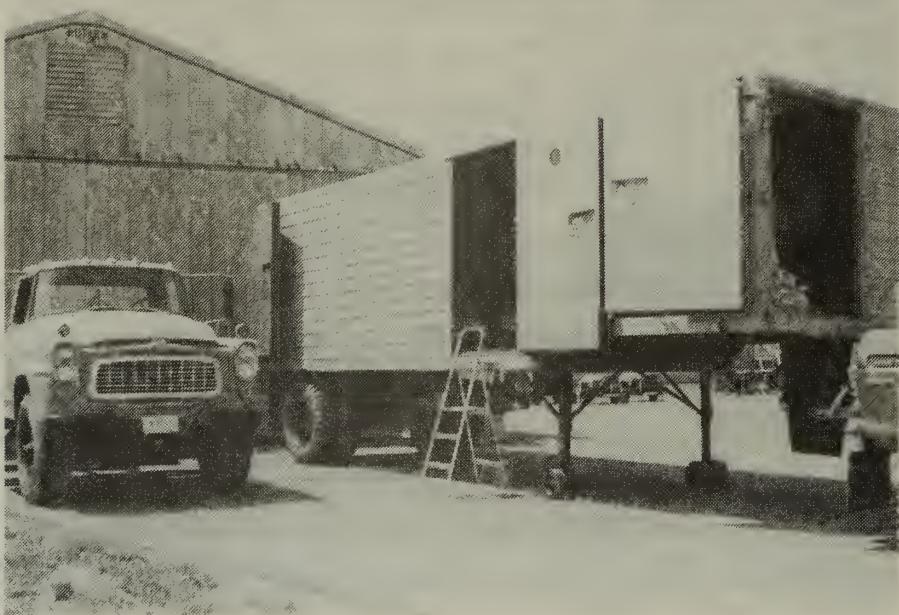


Illustration 11

Because the school is a "mobile" program, this equipment is able to be moved to various locations in the state. These labs, though, only provide part of the training needed by state fire

fighters. To gain the proficiency needed to fight a fire properly, fire fighters also need other realistic training, which is possible through various types of equipment. Responses to our survey also indicate that the state's fire chiefs and fire fighters desire more hands-on training.

FSTS FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS TRAILER



Illustration 12

Because of difficulties in finding areas/buildings for training with actual fires, as well as only being able to train a small group of people at one time, simulation of fire conditions becomes more practical. In order to provide such training, additional specialized equipment such as simulators and fire fighting equipment is necessary.

The school presently has only very basic equipment to simulate fire conditions during a classroom situation. This equipment includes a model home used for table top demonstrations of ventilation procedures and a set of building blocks used to construct and demonstrate various fire conditions. Without the needed hands-on experience, which could be gained through the use of more realistic simulators, fire fighters are receiving limited training.

More realistic simulators allow the actions of the trainee to be compared against the correct methods. If mistakes are made, they are corrected in a controlled/classroom setting, not in an actual fire where an error could cause destruction and/or death. Improved equipment, to allow for better training, would help the school provide more professional training to the state's fire fighters.

### Hazardous Material Training

Montana fire fighters presently receive a limited amount of hazardous material training. Our FSTS trainee survey indicated that only 21 percent of the responding state's fire fighters have received any training on hazardous materials. This amounts to approximately 1,400 to 2,200 fire fighters in the entire state. Almost half of the personnel who have received training stated they received their hazardous material training from the Fire Services Training School. Because the school gives only limited classes in incident analysis and flammable liquids, many areas pertinent to Montana are not being covered--areas such as toxic substances, poisonous material determination, and hazardous solids.

With today's construction materials, fire fighters are also exposed to other hazards when fighting common structural fires. Toxic substances, such as PVC and insulation, all become hazards when they are fuel for a fire. Without proper training, the potential risk to the fire fighter and the public is increased.

Because of funding limitations and the necessary direction the FSTS has chosen to move in regard to classes offered (basic fire fighting for structural fires), little emphasis has been placed on hazardous materials. Increased hazardous material training could be part of the professional training offered to fire fighters.

### Public Education

Section 20-31-103(7), MCA, states that one purpose of the school is to provide public educational programs to promote fire prevention. The FSTS is presently providing little public

education to the state. In the past fiscal year only eleven classes were given in Montana with approximately 50 percent of the classes in the Great Falls area.

The school's Fire Safety Education Program was initially started and funded by the federal government in 1977. Its objective was to reduce the loss of fire and property through education programs directed at the public. Fire education given by the school included such topics as wood stoves, smoke alarms, home safety, and children's programs. The FSTS produced written materials, offered grants, and directly delivered training to fire services personnel on how to conduct effective fire prevention programs.

In 1982, the federal grant, given to the school as "seed" money for the public educations programs, expired. The Montana legislature did not fund the school's request to maintain the program.

The FSTS currently has not been able to promote public fire safety education due to lack of funding. The responsibility of educating the public is now left in the hands of local fire departments, private organizations, and the federal government, each of which do little in the area. During our audit, we contacted these groups and found that each overwhelmingly believed the school should take a more active role in providing public safety programs which then could be distributed to local fire departments. These programs could then be given as lectures, seminars, etc., at the local departments' convenience.

### Summary

The FSTS presently is responsible for providing training to paid, volunteer, and other publicly or privately employed fire fighters. Our audit noted that over 40 percent of all responding fire fighters who receive any type of training receive it from the school. Still over 21 percent of Montana's fire departments have never received any formal training from any source in the last two years.

Montana's fire chiefs and fire fighters have expressed their satisfaction with the training received from the school. Responses to our survey have indicated that over 64 percent of fire chiefs and 75 percent of trainees believe the school is doing an above average or excellent job. On an unsolicited basis, over 40 percent of our respondents stated that the FSTS is providing an important useful function.

The state's fire chiefs have indicated that they believe the school's major purpose is to provide them with training. The FSTS, with its current resources, is not able to adequately provide the amount of needed training in Montana. As shown by our survey responses, the FSTS is rated very high in regard to the training and services it provides. The school, however, is not able to meet the stated legislative intent of providing paid, volunteer, and other publicly or privately employed fire fighters with professional training to reduce loss of life and property damage. The current level of funding has only allowed the school to provide limited training to a small portion of Montana's fire fighters each year. Recent efforts by the school to increase its training coverage through increased funding have not been successful.

#### FIRE SERVICES COORDINATION

Fire services training in the state of Montana presently lacks coordination. Many training providers exist in the state, including the Fire Services Training School, the Fire Marshal Bureau, the Department of State Lands, federal agencies, other state agencies, private firms, and local fire departments. Most direct their training to a particular audience and do not coordinate types of classes and, more importantly, times at which they are to be presented.

In the last year we have found examples of classes being conducted at the same time by different providers in the same portion of the state. Each class included important, needed information for fire services personnel, but due to poor coordination could only accommodate limited audiences. Below are specific examples:

--In April 1985, the FSTS sponsored a Montana/Alberta Instructor Conference in Whitefish. During the same weekend, the Missoula Rural Fire Department scheduled a nationally-known lecturer from the National Fire Academy (NFA). Subsequently, Missoula area personnel were not represented at the conference, nor were other state fire services members able to attend the NFA session.

--In March 1985, the Department of State Lands conducted a course for fire wardens in Lewistown. At the same time, the FSTS sponsored a NFA course in another part of Lewistown for commanding initial response.

--During the fall of 1984, the FSTS conducted an instructors meeting in Baker. The Fire Marshal Bureau presented an arson detection class at Glendive at the same time. Since participants at each session were eligible for either, a choice had to be made to attend only one. Valuable training was missed.

Each of the above examples illustrates the need for better coordination of fire services training. Present training in the state is limited and when offered needs to be accessible to as many personnel as possible. Conflicting classes lessen the amount of training available to fire fighters.

The major cause for the lack of coordination stems from little communication between training providers and minimal planning. No single entity exists to gather information on training and distribute it accordingly.

Section 20-31-104, MCA, states that the FSTS "shall coordinate its programs and cooperate with state and local fire services to the maximum possible extent in accordance with the policy of the Board of Public Education." The Fire Services Training School should work with leadership of all segments of the fire services and coordinate fire services training in the state. The FSTS should try to coordinate fire services training into a schedule which offers minimal conflict.

#### RECOMMENDATION #1

WE RECOMMEND THE FSTS COORDINATE FIRE SERVICES TRAINING IN MONTANA.

## STATUTORY COMPLIANCE

Section 20-31-103, MCA, outlines specific responsibilities for the Fire Services Training School. During our audit we found two subsections of this statute which do not currently reflect FSTS training practices.

Section 20-31-103(4), MCA, states that the school is to "provide training in investigating the cause of fire." During our audit we found that the FSTS no longer provides any training in this area. Based upon an oral agreement with the State Fire Marshal in 1983, the Fire Marshal Bureau has assumed all responsibility for providing fire investigation training. This was implemented to avoid duplication.

Section 20-31-103(5), MCA, states that one of the purposes of the school is to "develop new methods of fire prevention and fire fighting." The FSTS presently only provides new methods of fire prevention and fighting, it does not develop them. Because of the school's limited resources, only methods which have already been developed by other sources are provided to Montana fire services personnel.

### RECOMMENDATION #2

WE RECOMMEND THE FSTS SEEK STATUTORY CHANGE TO SECTION 20-31-103, MCA, TO REFLECT CURRENT TRAINING PRACTICES.

## CHAPTER IV

### SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

The Fire Services Training School staff administers training sessions and certification programs, issues certificates awarded for completion of training courses, and maintains and updates records of fire fighter/instructor training. The staff also coordinates the school's fire service library, audiovisual resources, and equipment for use by fire chiefs and instructors, as well as for staff research. This chapter discusses our performance audit findings regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of current school administrative procedures.

#### OFFICE AUTOMATION

During our review of the FSTS, we identified deficiencies in the school's record-keeping and filing systems. All data collection, exam grading, information management, mailing lists, and audio/visual scheduling is performed manually. No word processing capabilities exist within the school. FSTS staff members have a difficult time gathering statistical information.

Because no automation exists within the FSTS, much time is spent manually receiving, recording, filing, developing, and mailing items. Because of the school's vast contact with fire fighters in the state and its unique information requirements, office automation is needed.

#### Training Records

One of the primary functions of the school is to track the training records of approximately 8,600 fire fighters. A record of each course attended and its details is kept on each person. Because the school maintains these records by hand, much time is spent manually updating and searching card files to obtain necessary information. A fire fighter may attend many classes a year, causing constant tracking of that person's record. This information is used by school personnel for certification purposes.

To determine what classes the school has offered in the past two years, we asked school personnel to provide us with a complete listing. None could be produced. Only quarterly reports, some of which were not readily available, could be found stating what classes the school has provided.

A listing of all persons who have received training in the last two years also was not readily available from the school. To obtain this information, a review of class attendance records had to be performed and not all attendance records were available.

Automation would allow the school to retain complete, comprehensive information which could be quickly retrieved. Staff time, as well as storage space, could be saved by use of an automated system.

#### Mailing Labels

Currently the school issues a great number of documents and reference materials to various fire services personnel. A quarterly newsletter is sent to over 900 different agencies/persons. Over 1,600 audio visual aids were loaned in 1984. Course announcements are sent to area fire departments. Confirmations of classes are made to each department after a class is scheduled. Each time one of these items is issued, school personnel manually generate mailing labels. The education specialist estimated he spends about 15-20 percent of his time dealing with mailings. Automation would provide the ability to consolidate all addresses and generate necessary labels. No manual typing of names, etc., would be necessary, saving staff members a great deal of time.

#### Word Processing

The administrative assistant presently types many forms and documents as part of day-to-day activities. Because each is typed on a typewriter, edits and revisions become time consuming. Reports, handouts, and course materials are all subject to editing and require much time to complete.

A major portion of each instructor's time also is spent on preparing training materials. Handouts, lesson plans, exams and exam questions, and analysis of test questions are just a few of these materials. With automation, each instructor would have the capabilities of revising and updating materials with a minimal amount of time spent. Continuity and completeness of training courses could be ensured, as well as the reduction of time devoted to these tasks, as a result of automation.

### Summary

Because of the small size of the FSTS and its unique information requirements, automation seems to be a viable solution to its record-keeping problems. The Department of Administration's Information Center Bureau recently conducted an analysis of the school's automation needs and determined that the total cost of such a system would range from \$16,000 to \$21,000 and would offer increased productivity and more efficient operations.

### RECOMMENDATION #3

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE FSTS IMPLEMENT AN AUTOMATED RECORD SYSTEM.

### OFFICE FACILITIES

The Fire Services Training School is presently located in the Great Falls Vocational-Technical Center. One instructor operates out of his home in Miles City. The vo-tech center provides the school with office space and a classroom. Funding for this service is provided through the center's General Fund appropriation.

The actual floor space of the school's office is limited. Three instructors, an administrative assistant, the director, and a multitude of resource materials and equipment are housed in an area approximately 25' X 48' (1,200 square feet). The office has no individual areas for the instructors, allowing little privacy. The school stores its larger equipment and prior year's documents in a garage located at the vocational-technical center.

Many distractions exist within the office. The school does not have an intercom line for transferring telephone calls. Visitors are received not only by the person they intended to meet, but by everyone within the office because of the lack of space and privacy. The copy machine, phone calls, and general conversations are common distractions within the office.

Because of the crowded office conditions, staff productivity is decreased. School employees estimated that at least one-half to one hour per day is lost per employee due to distractions. For an entire year, this would amount to the equivalent of .5 FTE.

The current office conditions at the school are inadequate. We believe that conditions can be improved at a minimal cost. Partitions can be installed to help provide more privacy for instructors. The phone system can be changed to one which allows the transfer of calls.

As the FSTS continues to expand its audiovisual and resource library, as well as its equipment, more physical space will be needed. Because significant improvements require funding, the FSTS should develop a plan outlining specific needs and costs to improve current office conditions.

#### RECOMMENDATION #4

WE RECOMMEND THE FSTS DEVELOP A PLAN TO IMPROVE CURRENT OFFICE CONDITIONS.

#### STAFF TRAINING

To adequately keep abreast of modern methods of fighting various types of fires, FSTS instructors need to be properly trained. Because of their roles as teachers, they must be knowledgeable on the technology and techniques of fire fighting. The present employees of the school receive little training.

The school currently has no formal plan specifying what training its employees need and when it will be provided. Because of the changing nature of the industry, FSTS instructors need to not only be aware of any advances in fire fighting, but also be

knowledgeable about each. To effectively train state fire fighters, the FSTS instructors need to be informed about current tactics and methods.

Because of the limited budget of the school, employee training has not been a high priority. A formal training program should be developed to determine what needs exist among the school's instructors. Weaknesses could be highlighted and when funding becomes available, each could be addressed.

RECOMMENDATION #5

WE RECOMMEND THE FSTS DEVELOP A FORMAL PLAN TO IDENTIFY EMPLOYEE TRAINING NEEDS AND PROVIDE TRAINING.

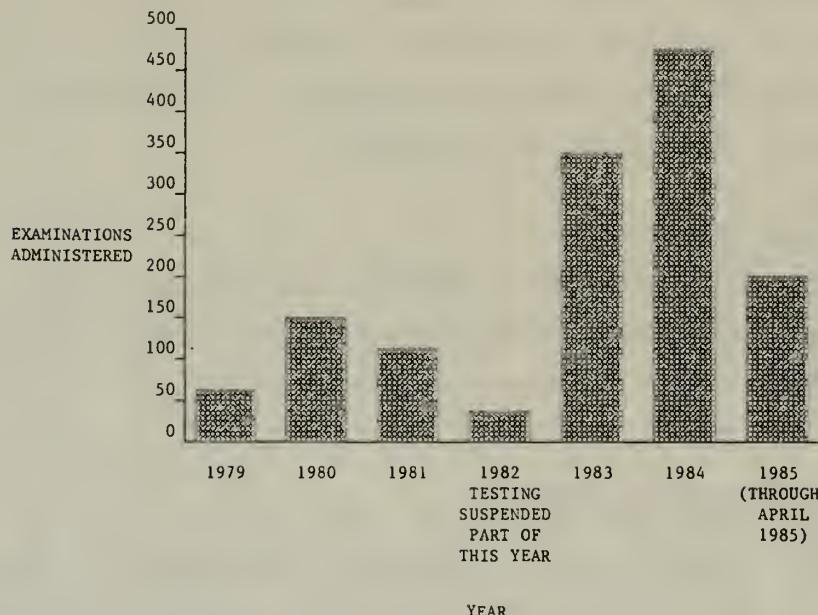
FSTS ADMINISTRATIVE STAFFING

The school's administrative assistant is assigned the responsibility for all administrative functions which include preparing financial reports, calculating payroll, filing school documents, answering calls, and receiving visitors. Because of the administrative assistant's heavy workload, instructors have had to do much of their own clerical work. Copying, mailing, filing, and, at times, typing functions have been performed by each of the instructors. Approximately 20 percent of each instructor's time, which could be spent on training related functions, is spent on clerical duties.

The excessive amount of work also has caused backlogs in the issuance of certificates. Over 300 certifications and over 700 attendance certificates have yet to be issued, developing a backlog of about nine months. With the continued interest in certification this backlog could become even larger. The following illustration details certification activity over the past seven years.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS ADMINISTERED

1979 to 1985



Source: Fire Services Training School

Illustration 13

The Fire Services Training School has previously requested funding for additional clerical support from the Legislature, but the funding was not approved. Without additional clerical support, the school will continue to get further behind in their certificate issuance and instructors will continue performing some noninstructional duties.

RECOMMENDATION #6

WE RECOMMEND THE FSTS CONTINUE TO SEEK ADDITIONAL CLERICAL SUPPORT.

FSTS ADVISORY COUNCIL

By statute, the Fire Services Training Advisory Council has been designated to advise the board and the director of the Fire

Services Training School on planning, coordination, governance, management, and control of the school. Regular meetings are held in March and September of each year. Ten members, including two ex officio, make up the council.

Section 2-15-1519, MCA, states that the membership of the council shall include the following:

- (1) a fire chief;
- (2) a volunteer fire fighter;
- (3) a paid fire fighter;
- (4) a fire service instructor;
- (5) a person involved in fire prevention;
- (6) an engineering representative of the Insurance Services Office;
- (7) a representative of the fire protection engineering industry; and
- (8) a fire control officer recommended by the administrator of the Division of Forestry.

The State Fire Marshal and the director of the Fire Services Training School are ex officio members of the council.

During our audit we found little indication that the council is taking an active role in advising the FSTS. Little communication exists between the school and the council except during their biannual meetings. The council presently offers little "advice" related to governance and management of the school. Participation in school activities by the council has been minimal in the last two years.

### Council Membership

There are a number of groups with little or no representation on the advisory council that might prove beneficial to the operation of the council and the Fire Services Training School.

The advisory council presently includes no representation of Montana counties, cities, or towns. Since these groups are responsible for the overall administration of county and city fire departments, representatives could be included on the advisory council.

The council also has no representative of the general public on its membership. Since a major function of the FSTS is to reduce the loss of life and property caused by fire, a person representing the public could offer input on the direction of the school.

Section 2-15-1519, MCA, presently requires an engineering representative of the Insurance Services Office (ISO) to sit on the council. This organization has not had an active representative for the last two years. The ISO has only two employees in the entire state. To allow for better representation of the insurance industry, a member from this industry as a whole could be placed on the council, as a substitute for the Insurance Services Office representative.

A representative of the fire protection engineering industry is also required to be a member of the council. The industry's present representative has not been involved with the council for approximately two years. Without specific interest and participation, member industries are not being effectively represented.

The membership of the FSTS advisory council is presently dictated by section 2-15-1519, MCA. To provide for better representation of concerned groups, the Board of Public Education should seek changes to this statute.

#### Role of the Advisory Council

Without active involvement of the council, the director of the school is making key school decisions without formal input from the industry which the FSTS serves. This lack of input appears to stem from the composition of the council and the working relationship between the school and the council. The advisory council is a link between fire services in the state and the school.

The director of the school and the school's sponsor should take steps to generate more involvement on the part of the council. The school director should maintain better contact with the advisory council and solicit their input on a more frequent basis. The administrative sponsor should replace inactive or ineffective members as needed to ensure that all groups are adequately represented.

RECOMMENDATION #7

WE RECOMMEND:

- A. THE SCHOOL'S DIRECTOR AND ITS SPONSOR GENERATE MORE INVOLVEMENT ON THE PART OF THE COUNCIL.
- B. THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION SEEK CHANGES TO SECTION 2-15-1519, MCA, TO ALLOW MORE FLEXIBILITY IN APPOINTING MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL.



## CHAPTER V

### SCHOOL SPONSORS/LOCATION

In the fall of 1984, the Legislative Audit Committee concurred with the request of the executive secretary of the Board of Public Education and the director of the Fire Services Training School that this audit should identify options for an administrative sponsor for the FSTS. Concerns were expressed by the board and the school that the board does not have adequate resources to handle the administration of the Fire Services Training School and that the two organizations have different responsibilities and concerns. This chapter discusses our review of the Board of Public Education and other potential administrative sponsors for the school.

### OTHER STATES

To determine how other states' fire services training functions are organized, we contacted ten states. These states were selected based on their location and size and were found to be organized in the following manner:

--Six are sponsored by an educational department, while three are controlled by a fire board or commission and one is attached to an executive branch department.

--All of the other states have adopted a "mobile" program which goes to the fire fighters.

--Training provided by other states' schools consist of:

Structural Fires	100%
Wild Land Fires	40%
Fire Suppression	100%
Fire Prevention	100%
Hazardous Materials	100%
Emergency Disasters	90%
Other (Arson)	10%

We also gathered information on sponsorship, funding, and the number of instructors associated with other state's fire services training functions. Because of the organization of each state's program and the types of programs, no direct comparison could be

made. However, Montana's Fire Services Training School differs very little from other states in terms of its size, training offered, and "mobile" direction.

### LOCATION

As part of our audit, we reviewed various alternative physical locations for the FSTS. From our observations and subsequent analysis, we found that the location of the school is not a major factor, if, as stated previously, it remains mobile. If the school elects to place its instructors in regional areas, they still will need to "go to the trainees." Actual location of the FSTS will be dependent on its administrative sponsor.

### PHYSICAL SPACE

As stated in Chapter IV, the current office conditions at the FSTS are inefficient. The school could use larger office and storage space to improve staff efficiency and productivity. If the school is placed under a new administrative sponsor, this problem should be addressed.

### POTENTIAL SPONSORS

Six potential sponsors were identified and subsequently reviewed based on the following:

1. Administrative Support
  - The availability of clerical support.
  - The availability of budgeting/accounting support.
2. Organizational Support
  - Placement of school within agency's structure.
  - Available locations throughout the state.
  - Similarity of functions.

Each of the above criteria was discussed with the potential sponsor and FSTS director. All comments were summarized and

the pros and cons of each sponsor determined. The following is a list of potential sponsors and a subsequent analysis of each. The order of presentation is not meant to reflect any preference of one potential sponsor over another.

POTENTIAL FSTS SPONSORS

1. Board of Public Education
2. University System
3. Department of Commerce
4. Department of Vocational Education Services
5. Department of State Lands
6. Department of Justice

Board of Public Education

Section 20-31-102, MCA, states that: 1) the FSTS is allocated to the Board of Public Education for purposes of planning and coordination; 2) the budget request for the school is submitted through the board, and 3) the general supervision of the school is vested in the board. At this time, the board offers little support to the FSTS. The major responsibility of the board is education at the kindergarten through twelfth grade levels. The Fire Services Training School is post-secondary. Organizationally, the school director reports directly to the board.

Administratively, the board can offer little support to the school. Its staff of two has little time to devote to FSTS needs. The board has also expressed the view that the FSTS's functions are dissimilar from those of the board.

Almost all financial functions are performed by the school. No specific budgeting or accounting help can be offered to the FSTS by the board due to the small size of its staff. All clerical functions are directly handled by the school.

The Board of Public Education does not appear to be a feasible sponsor for the Fire Services Training School. We concur with the board that the school's functions are dissimilar from those of the board and a new administrative sponsor should be selected.

### University System

The university system expressed a willingness to sponsor the FSTS. The system believes that each has a common objective, to teach post-secondary students. University system officials also believe that development and operation of any future fire service degree programs could also be better coordinated with school activities if the school is attached to the university system.

Administratively, the university system would be able to offer the school much more support than what it is presently receiving. By placing the school under a specific institution within the system, all financial functions, as well as certain other administrative functions (receiving visitors, answering calls, copying documents, etc.), could be assumed by the institution. The FSTS's administrative assistant could concentrate more on other facets of her workload. The university system is also automated, which would allow the FSTS access to their computers and word processors. If placed within one unit of the university system, organizationally the director could report directly to the president or to a senior administrator.

The physical location of the school would depend upon which unit of the university system it was attached to. Because the school is mobile, and with the increased use of contract instructors, the importance of the physical location of the FSTS is lessened. The university system is a feasible sponsor for the Fire Services Training School.

### Department of Commerce

The Department of Commerce is a diverse state agency with many programs such as Montana promotions, business assistance, and business and professional licensing. As of July 1, 1985, the Building Codes Division, presently under the Department of

Administration, will be transferred to the Department of Commerce. Because of the similarities of Building Codes and the FSTS (protecting buildings) we initially reviewed the department as a potential sponsor for the school.

Commerce can offer the FSTS additional administrative support. All financial-related transactions could be processed through the department's Management Services Division. This would reduce the administrative assistant's present workload. Commerce is also automated, which would allow the school access to the state's mainframe computer and also the agency's word processors.

The location of the school probably could stay the same, with the Department of Commerce, because of the need for instructors to visit the state's fire departments to conduct training. The physical location is not a major concern.

However, the Department of Commerce has expressed a reluctance to sponsor the school. Because of its diversity, the department is planning to reorganize to better achieve its goals and objectives. At the present time, the feasibility of placing the school within the department is less than placing it with other possible sponsors. The mission of the school to educate does not appear to coincide with the Department of Commerce's current functions.

Department of Vocational Education Services - Office of Public Instruction

The Department of Vocational Education Services of the Office of Public Instruction is also a willing sponsor. The department supervises secondary and post-secondary vocational education in the state. Since the training of Montana fire fighters is a form of post-secondary education, there is some similarity of responsibility/function.

With sponsorship, the department would relieve the FSTS of their financial functions, as all would be assumed by the Office of Public Instruction. This could, again, allow the school's administrative assistant to complete other necessary functions. The

school could also have access to the department's data processing capabilities.

The probable placement of the school could be under the assistant superintendent of the Department of Vocational Education Services. This structuring would put the school in the position of reporting to the assistant superintendent who reports to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

With department sponsorship, the school could continue to use the "mobile" concept and either remain in Great Falls or move to Helena. The Department of Vocational Education Services is a feasible sponsor for the FSTS.

#### Department of State Lands

The Department of State Lands' Forestry Division currently administers a wild land fire management training program which includes fire suppression, detection, and prevention. The division maintains this program for state and private fire fighters in Montana. It also provides direct assistance in designing training materials and fire fighter qualifications and standards on regional and national levels. The FSTS is the structural fire counterpart of State Lands.

Administratively, the division would be able to offer increased support to the school. Financial, data processing, space, and word processing support could be gained by the FSTS with State Lands sponsorship. Specific financial duties could be assumed by the department's Centralized Services Division, freeing time for the school's administrative assistant. The use of the division's data processing and word processor could help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the school. State Lands also has the ability to obtain government surplus equipment which the FSTS could take advantage of.

With State Lands sponsorship, the school could become a section under the Fire Management Bureau. The FSTS director would then report to the bureau chief, who in turn reports to the state forester. The state forester is responsible to the Commissioner of State Lands.

Many options are available for location of the FSTS. The Forestry Division is currently located in Missoula, but also has 15 area offices which could house the school itself or its regional instructors. Each office has its own microcomputer and audio/visual equipment. The Department of State Lands is a feasible sponsor for the Fire Services Training School.

#### Department of Justice

The Department of Justice offers two options for sponsorship of the Fire Services Training School: within the Fire Marshal Bureau (FMB) or, as a separate bureau within the Law Enforcement Services Division.

The FMB assists local fire and law enforcement officials with arson and fire investigations upon request. The bureau has established arson and fire investigation as a high priority, and spends most of its time with this function. A basic arson investigation school at the state's Law Enforcement Academy in Bozeman is conducted by the bureau annually.

The Law Enforcement Services Division currently assists other law enforcement agencies through its Criminal Investigation Bureau, Law Enforcement Academy Bureau, Identification Bureau, and Fire Marshal Bureau.

The FSTS could be established as a part of the Fire Marshall Bureau or as a bureau within the division. The director of the school would then report to the State Fire Marshal or to the division administrator, who in turn reports to the Attorney General.

Administratively, the school could reduce its workload with either option as the department's Central Services Division would assume its financial functions. Other administrative advantages would be minimal as the school would be autonomous and have to continue using much of their own resources.

The school's location could have two options: remain in Great Falls or share the Law Enforcement Academy. Either option would continue to have the FSTS instructors as mobile trainers. Even though there are some administrative disadvantages, the Department of Justice is still a feasible sponsor for the FSTS.

## SUMMARY

Sponsorship of the FSTS by the Board of Public Education presently does not appear to be feasible. Little administrative or organizational support can be offered to the school by the board. Each also differs in regard to their intended functions. Because of this relationship, the Fire Services Training School should be placed under a new administrative sponsor.

The other options previously discussed were chosen as feasible alternatives for FSTS sponsorship after reviewing numerous other state agencies and programs. Each option could offer the school increased administrative and organizational support which would allow the FSTS to better achieve its purpose.

Illustration 14 specifies what each agency could offer to the Fire Services Training School as an administrative sponsor. The first three options could provide the school with increased support in all areas we reviewed. The others can furnish limited support.

### SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL SPONSORS

<u>Potential Sponsors</u>	<u>Administrative Support</u>		<u>Organizational Support</u>	
	<u>Clerical</u>	<u>Funding/ Accounting</u>	<u>Similarity of Functions</u>	<u>Placement/ Status</u>
University System	Yes	Yes	Yes	Within University
Vocational-Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Separate Program
State Lands	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bureau
Department of Commerce	Yes	Yes	No	Bureau
Department of Justice				
Fire Marshal Bureau	No	Yes	Yes	Program
Law Enforcement	No	Yes	Yes	Bureau
Board of Public Education	No	No	No	Separate Program

Source: Office of the Legislative Auditor

Illustration 14

### RECOMMENDATION #8

WE RECOMMEND THE MONTANA LEGISLATURE PLACE THE FSTS UNDER A NEW ADMINISTRATIVE SPONSOR.

## AGENCY RESPONSES



MONTANA FIRE SERVICES TRAINING SCHOOL  
BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION



TED SCHWINDEN, GOVERNOR

2100 16TH AVENUE SOUTH

STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 761-7885

GREAT FALLS, MONTANA 59405-4997

July 29, 1985

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JUL 31 1985

MONTANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

Mr. Dave Gould  
Performance Audit Supervisor  
Office of the Legislative Auditor  
State Capitol  
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Mr. Gould:

I have reviewed your final report on the Fire Services Training School audit. May I say at the outset, that it has been a sometimes enjoyable, but always educational experience to be put through the performance audit process. Many ideas and perspectives have come to mind which were otherwise unexposed. I would like to reply to your recommendations specifically and generally.

**RECOMMENDATION #1**

We recommend the FSTS coordinate Fire Services Training in Montana.

**Response**

Concur. FSTS has been doing all that it can under current law to remedy this problem. If we fail to see increased cooperation and coordination in the near future, we will propose legislation to require it.

**RECOMMENDATION #2**

We recommend the FSTS seek statutory change to 20-31-103, MCA, to reflect current training practices.

**Response**

Concur. FSTS will propose legislation to modify Section 20-31-103(5) MCA so that it reflects more accurately what we are able to do with existing resources.

Section 20-31-103(4) MCA states "provide training in investigating the cause of fire." This Section is still valid, and we do not see the need for a change. FSTS turned over the Course "Fire/Arson Detection" to the State Fire Marshal's Office to deliver around the State, in hopes that it would increase the number of deliveries. This allows FSTS to allocate resources to other topics. FSTS Staff and Field Instructors, from time to time, may cover "fire cause" and related topics and we continue to maintain a host of resource materials for instructor support in this area.

**RECOMMENDATION #3**

We recommend that the FSTS implement an automated record system.

**Response**

Concur. FSTS has purchased a personal computer, however its capabilities will not meet our needs entirely. The purchase is viewed as a stop gap measure at best. Attempts will be made to obtain funding for the system recommended by the Department of Administration again in the next Legislative session.

**RECOMMENDATION #4**

We recommend the FSTS develop a plan to improve current office conditions.

**Response**

Concur. A plan will be developed and funding requested during the next Legislative session.

**RECOMMENDATION #5**

We recommend the FSTS develop a formal plan to identify employee training needs and provide training.

**Response**

Concur. A plan will be developed and funding will be requested during the next Legislative session.

**RECOMMENDATION #6**

We recommend the FSTS continue to seek additional clerical support.

**Response**

Concur. FSTS will seek additional clerical support during the next Legislative session.

**RECOMMENDATION #7**

We recommend:

- A. The School's Director and its sponsor generate more involvement on the part of the Council.
- B. The Board of Public Education seek changes to Section 2-15-1519, MCA to allow more flexibility in appointing members of the Advisory Council.

**Response**

Concur. FSTS will generate more involvement on the part of the Advisory Council and assist the Board of Public Education in bringing changes to Section 2-15-1519 MCA, which would facilitate the flexibility recommended.

Page 3  
Dave Gould  
July 29, 1985

**RECOMMENDATION #8**

We recommend the Montana Legislature place the FSTS under a new administrative sponsor.

**Response**

Concur.

All of the recommendations made by the Legislative Auditor's Office will be vigorously pursued. Many however will require substantial changes in current funding. In conclusion, I concur with every substantive issue addressed by this report, and compliment the Legislative Auditor's Staff for a very professional and comprehensive job.

Sincerely,



Seldon S. Weedon  
Director

SSW:pjk

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BOARD OF  
PUBLIC EDUCATION

TO: \_\_\_\_\_

X TO: \_\_\_\_\_

CC to: \_\_\_\_\_



# THE MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

33 SOUTH LAST CHANCE GULCH  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-2602  
(406) 444-6570

COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

July 30, 1985

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**JUL 30 1985**

**MONTANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR**

Mr. Dave Gould  
Performance Audit Supervisor  
Office of the Legislative Auditor  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Mr. Gould:

We have reviewed the draft copy of the performance audit of the Fire Services Training School. With the exception of some minor wording changes, which are attached, the statement is correct.

Sincerely,

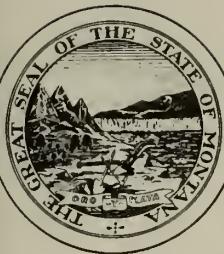
*Carrol Krause*

Carrol Krause  
Deputy Commissioner  
for Academic Affairs

CK/lw

Attachment

# DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



TED SCHWINDEN, GOVERNOR

1424 9TH AVENUE

## STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 444-3494

HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0401

July 3, 1985

Dave Gould  
Performance Audit Supervisor  
Office of the Legislative Auditor  
State Capitol  
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Mr. Gould:

Thank you for your letter of June 21, 1985, accompanying the draft report of your performance audit of the Montana Fire Services Training School.

We have reviewed the comments contained in the report regarding the future location of the School and concur with those statements on the Department of Commerce.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the audit report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Keith L. Colbo".

Keith L. Colbo  
Director

KLC/ag

# The Office of Public Instruction

Ed Argenbright  
State Superintendent

State Capitol  
Helena, Montana 59620  
(406) 449-3654



July 9, 1985

RECEIVED

Mr. Dave Gould  
Performance Audit Supervisor  
Office of the Legislative Auditor  
State Capitol  
Helena, Montana 59620

STATE OF MONTANA AUDITOR

Dear Mr. Gould:

At your request for comment, I am submitting this brief statement respecting the potential of the Office of Public Instruction as an administrative sponsor of the Montana Fire Services Training School.

The performance audit has identified three potential sponsors capable of assisting the Fire Services Training School in its operation. It is assumed that your listing on page 39 is reflective of a priority which identifies the Department of Vocational Education Services second to the University System. Until such time as the current Legislative Interim Study Committee finalizes a governance recommendation pertaining to Montana's Vocational-Technical Centers, I feel it is inappropriate to comment.

You may be assured that the Office of Public Instruction will extend assistance in this matter and we are confident that the recommendation to the Montana Legislature will result in careful deliberation affording the Fire Services Training School the best available option.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Argenbright".  
Ed Argenbright  
Superintendent

hd

# DEPARTMENT OF STATE LANDS



TED SCHWINDEN, GOVERNOR

## STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 444-2074

1625 11TH AVENUE  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620

July 30, 1985

Dave Gould  
Performance Audit Supervisor  
Office of the Legislative Auditor  
Capitol Station  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Mr. Gould:

Enclosed I am returning the Discussion Draft of the Performance Audit for the Fire Services Training School. We have reviewed the report and agree as stated that the Department of State Lands is a feasible sponsor for the Fire Services Training School.

In reality DSL and FSTS are attempting to reach the same firefighters with the wildland and with structural aspects of fire training. The continuing increase of structures intermixed with wildland indicates the need for a consolidated approach in providing both types of training services. The Department functions not only in a support role for wildland fire training, but is also an established fire protection agency. Organizational breakdown and administrative locations lend themselves well to providing avenues of training service to firefighters of a city, county, rural or volunteer fire department.

Therefore, not only is it feasible for the Department to assume sponsorship of FSTS through the Division of Forestry; it is highly desirable. Combination of these two aspects of fire training would provide consistent and higher quality programs in meeting the needs of firefighter training throughout Montana.

While the combination of the two aspects is desirable for increased efficiency, further study is needed. Any action would necessarily be predicated on adequate availability of resources to ensure that the services of either program and the resulting fire suppression training are not diminished.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Hemmer".  
Dennis Hemmer, Commissioner  
Department of State Lands

jc

RECEIVED  
JUL 30 1985  
MONTANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR

STATE  
OF  
MONTANA

**ATTORNEY GENERAL  
MIKE GREELY**

JUSTICE BUILDING, 215 N. SANDERS, HELENA, MONTANA 59620  
TELEPHONE (406) 444-2026

9 July 1985

Dave Gould  
Performance Audit Supervisor  
Office of the Legislative Auditor  
State Capitol  
Helena MT 59620

Dear Mr. Gould:

Your office has requested my comments with respect to your performance audit of the Fire Services Training School (FSTS), in which you suggested that the Department of Justice could be a "feasible sponsor for the FSTS."

My staff and I have undertaken a study of the entire organizational structure of the Department of Justice, and have considered inclusion of the FSTS within our Department as a feature of a reorganization plan. We have concluded that the Department could indeed become the sponsor of the FSTS, and could provide effective and productive supervision of the school, if the Legislature decides to transfer it into the Department of Justice. You are correct in noting that the Department already manages services that are closely allied to the FSTS--the Montana Law Enforcement Academy and the state Fire Marshal. I believe that the FSTS and the people it serves could benefit from inclusion into the same administrative and policy framework that houses the Academy and the Fire Marshal.

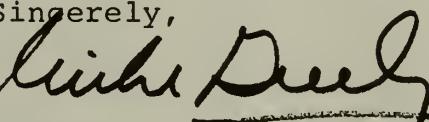
I would attach one caveat to the preceding comment: We are currently coping with a crisis in facilities for the Montana Law Enforcement Academy, because the Legislature has not yet addressed the Academy's need for a new facility; the Department of Justice cannot support a plan to assume management responsibility for another training program (i.e., the Fire Services Training School) unless that plan includes new facilities for the Law Enforcement Academy, facilities that can also accommodate the FSTS.

Dave Gould  
Page 2  
9 July 1985

I hope these comments are helpful.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

  
MIKE GREELY  
Attorney General





